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MEMORANDUM

Date: April 26, 2006

To: Parks and Recreation Department Commissioners

From: William C. Scalzo, Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'WCS', is written over the 'From' line.

Re: **Director's Summary of Current Events**

Listed below are issues that the department has been involved with since the April Director's Summary.

Superintendent Report

Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area (SCRCA): John Gunn continues to provide training and orientation of the new Spur-X Interpretive Ranger, Kevin Smith. Kevin comes to Parks with 10 years experience managing the ethno botany trail at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix.

The Sonoran Arts League has completed a community service project on the SCRCA; to paint a large desert mural in order to reduce the visual intrusion created by our field office-storage trailer. The project turned out to be a first class effort & many positive comments are being received via our visitors.

John Gunn continues to coordinate with staff of the Tonto National Forest to tap in to their expertise how to deal with a significant noxious weed infestation (Star Thistle) that is occurring on the Conservation Area. John is hopeful the forest, the county, and ASU will partner in the treatment & assessment of the methods used in combating this menace.

Kevin Smith completed our first mechanical attempt at star thistle control. Kevin supervised an Eagle Scout project that resulted in some 25 large bags of ripened thistles being removed, as well as clearing fuels from the areas around the bases of several saguaros & ironwood trees to prepare them for an eventual prescribed burn treatment.

John Gunn coordinated a meeting with the leadership of the MCPRD & the Tonto National Forest, the objective being to better know each other & better understand how issues can affect both agencies. We made new commitments to function together as partners. Examples ranged from requests for a national fire management strategy being applied to the forest lands north of Spur-X, Star thistle control, and working together to evaluate the legalities associated with the ongoing diversion of water from seven springs for a private bottled water business.

John Gunn is coordinating with the Smithsonian Institution to have a fairly famous Tucson Naturalist, Pinau Merlin present a seminar in desert ecology at Spur Cross on November 4, 2006.

John Gunn is working with NAU Ecological Restoration Institute to schedule the spring post-burn monitoring effort on the Cave Creek Regional Park burn site.

John Gunn and Kevin Smith attended another meeting of the Open Space Working Group; this effort is multi-agency & multi-jurisdictional assessment of all lands suitable for conservation in the north central portion of Maricopa County. The Desert Foothills Land Trust & Black Mountain Conservancy are the primary proponents of this activity.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park: The Park had a great turn out for Easter Sunday with approximately 2400 cars bringing in about \$12,000 for the day. PIR had their second April race and it was again successful.

McDowell Mountain Regional Park: As the "Busy Season" begins to slow, camping at McDowell Mountain Regional Park has remained stronger than in previous years. April saw campground occupancy up as well as daily use. Both are reflected in the revenues exceeding projected revenues and those from last year. In spite of losing a major event in the fall, the 24 Hours of Adrenaline due to financial problems of the parent company and having the Nova Desert Classic removed from the national NORBA race series and reducing the participants by about half, revenues for the park are up over 2004-05 fiscal year.

Work is progressing on the replacement of Comfort Station #5 in the North Loop of the campground and the new Entry Station. Although slow, progress can be seen and the most recent projection is for both projects to be completed in early June.

Park Supervisor Rand Hubbell has also discussed the possibility of the Maricopa Trail connecting with a nature trail that the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation is planning along the Verde River. As the Nation approaches a more solidified plan and sets a time frame for establishing the nature trail, Chris Coover will become the contact for blending the Maricopa Trail with the Yavapai Nation.

Earth Day at McDowell Mountain Regional Park included a great family event which took place in the park's Visitor Center. Liberty Wildlife brought an exhibit of live birds of prey which was set up along side the venomous creatures maintained at McDowell Mountain Regional Park. The two hour event drew children of all ages and prompted many questions of Park Interpretive Ranger Paul Marusich.

While that exhibit was being held in the Visitor Center, Park Supervisor Rand Hubbell and Eastside Trails Planner Joe Ballengee took a group of volunteers from the NOVA Youth Cycling Team out to do some volunteer trail work on the extension of the Dixie Mine Trail and the new trail which will connect the Park with the McDowell Sonoran Preserve.

Usery Mountain Regional Park: Though this April was slower, as in March day-use was up but due to fuel prices camping use was down severely. The great Usery Park story in April is that we have surpassed our total 2005 annual pass sales of 610 passes by selling 616 passes year to date by April 23rd. Easter weekend was busy with ramada reservations for picnics and Wind Cave was packed with hikers. At 7 am Easter Sunday the historic sheep drive moved their herd through the park with 2000 sheep and Monday morning with another 2000; always a favorite with the visitors and campers. This family has been doing this sheep drive from Chandler up to the White Mountains through this area since 1914.

The park had a very successful host season. They were awesome in staffing the entry station 14 hours a day from October 15th to April 23rd and that is the Usery equation to our revenue stream and high sales of annual passes. They always had smiles on their faces, the first faces for contact to our park visitors and we had no complaints this year about the hosts. They also did a stellar job of cleaning camp sites every day and staffing interpretive programs with the ranger. Unfortunately, they have all left now for cooler climes and the park supervisor is looking for year-round hosts to help in the campground and entry station.

Interpretive Ranger Amy Roberts attended the Feathered Friends Festival at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve this month where she talked to 552 participants. She also conducted several bee ecology interpretive hikes; with several large bee hives in the park people are always alerting us about their location in the Wind Cave and on the Vista Trail. The Fitness Challenge Series of 6 hikes still proves to have been very popular, resulting in those participants starting their own hiking club. They participated in April's fitness hikes, along with numerous newcomers. The April monthly hike for seniors proved successful but we are still not having very many participants attend the disabilities/diversity hikes.

The Earth Day "Hike-A-Thon" special event went well with 140 hikers strong. With costumes borrowed from the Forest Service, Smokey Bear (Alex Stalman) and Woodsy Owl (Ray Martin) hiked around the Merkle Trail along with Ranger Bill Talboys with kids and their parents. Smokey and Woodsy also pawed around the registration area for pictures with all the hikers and park visitors. Ranger Bill had a venomous critter display that was very popular and Rural/Metro was on hand with information about pool safety and wildland fire. Lindsay Gratham from the County wellness department was there with lots of information about heart health, diabetes etc. She was very helpful and dynamic. We had four guided hikes: Pass Mountain, Cat Peaks, Moon Rock and Merkle Trail or hikers could hike on their own. We had a

drawing for an annual pass and a drawing for a \$25 gift certificate to REI plus lots of pencils, magnets and water bottles for give-a-ways to registered hikers.

We are continuing to move on the Wildlife Viewing Pond grant, we have finally gotten the cultural clearance and will be starting on the construction of that grant project. The new water line coming off of Ranger Rider Trail from the City of Mesa on the west side of the park has been flagged and mapped and the surveyors have started rolling on their end of the project. General maintenance projects in the park are repainting all the old bathrooms, resurfacing the roofs of the picnic ramadas and painting all the gates and perimeter entrances to the park.

We have finished up with the new IGA with the Forest Service and both agencies have agreed to match shovel and muscle work on the Pass Mountain and Wind Cave Trails for much needed trail work in the next year. The Eastside Trail Planner will be training the Usery Park staff in trail maintenance to handle much of the agreed-upon work and volunteer crews will be assisting. The park supervisor is beginning to have conversations with several local organizations about the possibilities of developing volunteers groups for this project. More information will be forthcoming as it develops.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park: Along with a strong showing for the MBAA bike race White tank hosted 24 public programs and hikes in the month of April.

White Tank staff members have completed 7 miles of bush and tree trimming on the north boundary. This work cleared the way for the fence contractor who has completed 5 miles of 4 strand barbed wire fence.

Easter offered a great day of public picnicking and recreation at White Tank. All ramadas and most camping areas were reserved. 250 out of 260 picnic sites in the park were occupied. Many contained large groups enjoying the day.

West Valley News papers and media are reporting on the Clean Up Day on the North Border of White Tank Park on April 29th. White Tank staff members are working with the West Valley Leadership Committee and the MCSO Trails Division to do a big clean up. Coordination efforts are expected to direct about 200 people to deposit trash in a roll off dumpster and into road side trash bags.

Park Supervisor Harris has worked with the West Valley Leadership Committee since the fall. Along with the clean up project the Committee will donate 2 benches to be placed at 2 playgrounds in the park.

Interviews are scheduled for the open Park Clerk position at White Tank. It is hoped that the position will be filled heading into May.

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Interviews have been conducted for five vacant positions at Lake Pleasant: 3- Contact Station Assistants, an Event Coordinator and a Parks Maintenance Worker. The candidate for the Event Coordinator and Park Maintenance Worker have been chosen. The positions will be offered once reference checks are completed and Departmental approval has been received. The interview panel has reviewed a second list of applicants for the Contact Station Assistants and interviews have been scheduled.

The Bradshaw Foothills Coalition Project is making progress. Three kiosks have been installed and educational information has been posted to educate OHV riders of the appropriate areas of operating their vehicles. Once the issues with the OHV riders in the northern portion of the Park have been resolved, the Coalition has agreed to help educate the OHV riders in the Table Mesa area.

The National Association for Interpretation Workshop conducted April 3 – 7 focused on enhancing the Visitor Center at Lake Pleasant. The Bureau of Reclamation funded the training for five attendees, which included two attendees from BOR, one from Central Arizona Project along with two Park Interpretive Rangers, Terry Gerber from Lake Pleasant and Amy Ford from the Desert Outdoor Center. The attendees were split up into four groups and tasked to develop an interpretive plan proposal for enhancement of the current facility and future needs. The plans are in the review process and future meeting with BOR and CAP will be scheduled to combine the plans to meet the Parks Department, BOR and CAP Missions and Goals.

The second annual Dam, Good, Walk/Run/Hike event was a success with 78 participants. All of the participants had positive comments about the event and look forward to next year's event.

The fifth annual Easter Egg Hunt was also a great success with 200 kids attending the event.

In celebration of Earth Day, Tres-Aqua Scuba and Park staff coordinated an underwater and shoreline clean up with 100 volunteers joining us in our efforts.

Our third annual Boating Safety Celebration has been scheduled for May 20th from 8:00 am – 1:00 pm.

Three additional on-water and shoreline clean-ups are being coordinated for the end of May and first part of June.

Desert Outdoor Center: Solar thermal HVAC system installed on DOC. Dedication held on April 18 was attended by about 100 individuals; among them were several dignitaries including US Representative J. D. Hayworth. Public open house on April 22 was attended by 120 people and featured Tony LaConte affording a view of the sun with an H-Alpha lens. The site of the system was landscaped to improve the entrance appearance to the DOC and includes a path for public interpretation of this solar energy technology.

In conjunction with the Solar thermal HVAC system, DOC staff worked with APS to draft language and produce three signs that will enhance passive educational opportunities at the DOC: Solar thermal HVAC technology; the Wildlife Protection Program of APS, which prevents raptor electrocutions at the DOC; and the ball court, which has always been considered a skate board rink by 6th Graders! These new signs are a quality addition to the DOC.

Materials for the boat dock in Honeymoon Cove have been ordered, and should arrive in mid-May. Assembly of the dock should be complete by the end of May. The Trails Crew will complete the preliminary work on the trail that will access the boat dock from the east dorm. We are anticipating between 500 and 700 Boy Scouts at the DOC in June and July earning aquatic merit badges as well as several others not associated with the aquatics education program.

Shelley Rasmussen, Native American rock art expert and Interpretive Ranger at the DOC, has enhanced the front entrance to the DOC by drawing examples of rock art on the double doors that housed the main APS electric panel for the DOC. DOC maintenance staff painted the doors to match the building, which afforded Shelley a beautiful "canvas" for her art work.

Maricopa Trail

Jarod Rodgers and Ted Koester/City of Phoenix have provided the conceptual alignment of Segment 7 connections to their National Trail on the west side of the South Mountain Park and at Pima Canyon.

Brenda Coover has requested an Educational Session presentation on the Maricopa Trail at the May 22nd Arizona Parks and Recreation Association Conference on Open Space.

Norm Hintz/NCH Associates has been provided with a site analysis for the proposed branch regional library at the entrance of White Tank Mountain Regional Park.

Andrea Moore/City of Mesa has made some progress with their legal department on fine tuning the details for the Segment 28 intergovernmental agreement.

The engineering group at Parks has completed the trail design consultant services questionnaire request process and selected EPG, Inc.

Pete Castaneda/Bureau of Reclamation has reviewed and approved the proposed Segment 13 alignment at Lake Pleasant Regional Park.

Arizona Department of Transportation continues to include the Maricopa Trail alignment in their State Route 303L Utility Design Concept Report stakeholder process.

Wallace Haws/HEC civil engineering is coordinating the Trail design stipulations with Vollmer Associates on the proposed Anthem Trailhead.

Tim Oliver/Maricopa County Department of Transportation has included the Trail in their Transportation System Plan Advisory Committee policy papers.

Maureen DeCindis/MAG and Peggy Rubach/MCDOT have included the regional Trail System Plan as part of their proposed Trail and Canal Crossing Guidelines process.

Denis Cournoyer/Aztec Engineering has provided Bernadette Jimenez/Rodrigo Flores/Town of Guadalupe, the Cities of Tempe and Phoenix, ADOT, MCDOT, MCPRD and the Pointe South Mountain with the existing conditions/right of way map at the first stakeholder meeting for the Sun Circle Trail at the proposed I-10 bridge crossing.

Gloria Nichols/Arizona State Land Department has requested and received additional information on the right of way application for the proposed Trailhead located at New River Road (7th Street) at the Linda Lane alignment; the applications/fees for Segments 16 and 18 (connecting Anthem to Cave Creek Regional Park and Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area) were submitted on April 3rd and Segment 14 was resubmitted via cover letter.

Mark Hollowell/ADOT has provided the written issues summary of the proposed 202 South Mountain Transportation Corridor impact on the regional trail agreed to by the Federal Highway Administration, ADOT and HDR Engineering.

Contract Updates

Lake Pleasant Regional Park: Parks attended a meeting at the Bureau of Reclamation pertaining to environmental assessment (NEPA) on the part of Skipper Marine Development – a step necessary in the permitting process for SMD to proceed with the new marina. A draft IGA with the City of Peoria has been developed to delineate responsibilities at the new marina.

Adobe Dam Regional Park: Discussions are on-going with Sahuaro Central regarding contract extension. The position of Parks is that they are willing to extend their existing Agreement until 2029 if concessions are made to relinquish part of their assigned parcel back to Parks that parallels Pinnacle Peak Road. This land is desired by Parks to be included as part of the Proposal to be released for additional Concessionaires. Release of the Proposal is dependent upon the result of on-going discussions with Sahuaro Central.

The assignment of Victory Lane Sports Complex from Sun States Sports, Inc. to KCCM Enterprises LLC is being finalized and will be placed on the Board of Supervisor's agenda with a recommendation for approval. If approved, all terms and conditions of the original Agreement, as amended, will continue. The proposed new owner has the required experience in the management of a sports complex and with plans for expansion of the facility, should result in an increase of revenue for Parks.

Discussions continue between Parks and Waterworld Safari. Progress has been made in the solicitation process required to select an appraiser – a necessary part of the "out-of-court" settlement (being discussed) and release of the Request for Proposal for a new Concessionaire to become effective October 1, 2008.

Agreement has been reached with Flood Control District in regards to amending the 1981 Agreement to correct statutory deficiencies and to update the existing Agreement. The amended Agreement, upon approval by the Board of Directors of the Flood Control District and the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, will have a term of fifty (50) years with a renewal option of up to fifty (50) years. The tentative date for the Amendment to be approved by the respective Boards is May 17, 2006.

Construction/Design Projects

Buckeye Hills Regional Park Public Shooting Range: Arrington Watkins Architects, LLC, is 100% complete with the construction documents.

Estrella Mountain Regional Park Irrigation System Improvements: J2 Engineering and Environmental Design have completed 100% plans and the pre-bid conference took place on April 25, 2006. The bid opening is May 9, 2006.

Entry Station Improvements 2006: Architectural Resource Team has completed 100% plans and the pre-bid conference is May 2, 2006. The bid opening is May 23, 2006.

Fencing at San Tan and White Tank Mountain Regional Parks: Security Fence of Arizona have completed the 7 miles of barb wire fence along the north boundary of White Tank, and has moved to San Tan North Finger to start the 8 miles of barb wire fence around the finger.

System Wide Master Plan: A scoping meeting with the superintendents, park supervisors, and trail planners will be conducted before the consultant selection process begins.

Usery Mountain Regional Park Water System Improvements: HDR Engineering completed the pressure and flow test and will proceed with the preliminary design. A meeting with the City of Mesa took place in April to discuss the connection details with the city water on Range Rider Trail.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park RV Dump Station Construction: The project was cancelled.

White Tank Mountain Regional Park Master Plan: The project was postponed.

Visitor Centers: On April 26, 2006, three architectural firms were interviewed. The firms include: ART, Design One, and TRK.

Coming and Going in Human Resources

The following people left Parks this past month:

- Joe Ortega, Trades Specialist
- Johnathan Blyler, Park Supervisor
- Will Wright, Trails Technician

The following people were hired at Parks this past month:

- Teresa Retterbush was hired as the new East Valley Regional Superintendent
- Jeanine O'Reilly was hired as the new Park Clerk at McDowell

We are currently recruiting for:

- Contact Station Assistant (2 temporary and 1 full-time) at Lake Pleasant
- Park Maintenance Worker (Lake Pleasant)
- Public Information Officer (Headquarters)
- Trail Technician (Trails Crew)
- Trades Specialist (Construction Crew)
- Park Supervisor (Estrella and Cave Creek)
- Park Office Clerk (White Tank)

Interviews are being conducted for PIO at Headquarters and for Park Clerk at White Tank. Interviews will soon be conducted for Park Maintenance Worker at McDowell.